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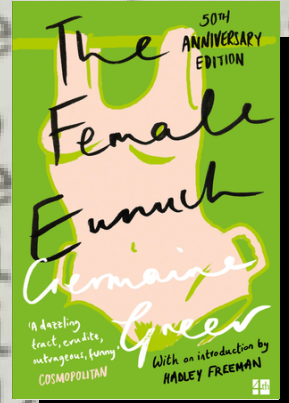
COBWEBS AND DIY FEMINIST MEDIA OF THE '80S AND '90S

Layout
Sion Edwards
Nigel
Rebecca
Andi
Ross
500
Nigel
special



THE SECOND WAVE

- mid **1960s**–mid **1980s**
- questioned **traditional** women's roles (housewife, mother, etc.)
- **equal** pay, education, bodily autonomy
- critiqued **beauty** standards
- consciousness raising
- activism and **protest** – intellectual and physical
- literature



The Feminine Mystique Betty Friedan

"If you've never read it, read it now."
—Arianna Huffington, *O, The Oprah Magazine*

Introduction by Gail Collins
Afterword by Anna Quindlen

Kate Millet Sexual Politics



At least 600 feminist magazines and newsletters are estimated to have circulated in the UK during the 1970s. Most had a DIY feel - low-budget, hand-drawn, compellingly messy. What caused this explosion of grassroots feminist media?

Technological development

Need for a young perspective

Dissatisfaction with mainstream magazines

Second wave feminist literature and ideals

Punk zines



SHOCKING PINK - EMERGENCE AND AIMS

SUBSCRIBE!

Have four extra birthdays a year! If you subscribe to Shocking Pink you get it delivered to your door every three months (approximately), and it's cheaper than buying it in the shops. Unless you're a man of course, in which case it's considerably more expensive. But there you go, it's your own fault, if you WILL be born made what can you expect!

BUYING IT IN THE SHOPS JUST ISN'T THE SAME.
No haw's how much it's gonna cost you.

Four issues:

Individuals	£3.00
Men and Institutions	£7.00
Europe	£5.00
Anywhere else	£7.00

'CHEAP INNIT'

Send cheques/postal orders/international money orders to:-



- ran 1981-82, and 1987-92
- produced by young women's collective - first gen - around ten women aged 16-20.
- came out of workshop at Young Women's Conference 1979
- first edition - only £800 to produce, 20p to buy



"we want a magazine that looks at fashion, music, books... all the usual subjects, but from a... realistic viewpoint... we also need a magazine that looks at issues which really affect us, like contraception, abortion, sexuality... all aspects of women's rights"



Alternative to mainstream girls' magazines

SHOCKING PINK¹ - CONTENT

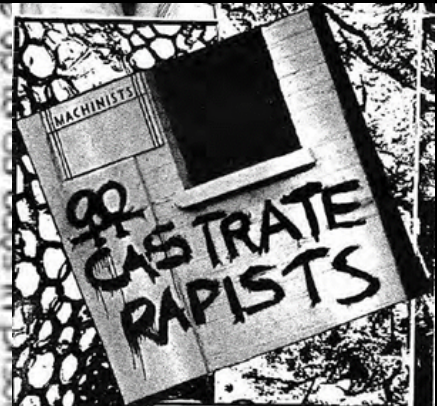
GEMMA Disabled &
able-bodied lesbians
Contact: BN BOX 5700,
WGIV 6XX



- vivid, **DIY** production with collage elements
- largely humorous, **fun**, rebellious tone
- explored **typical girls magazine topics** - fashion, love, friendship with a feminist viewpoint
- **community** formation - particularly for more **marginalised** women - young, LGBTQ+, POC
- only female-identified contributors
- encouraged feminist **activism**
- spoke about **political issues** in a range of ways - cartoons, photo stories, traditional articles etc. - **always accessible**

**YEAH! THE
BIRMINGHAM 6
ARE FREE!!!**

RACISM in FASHION

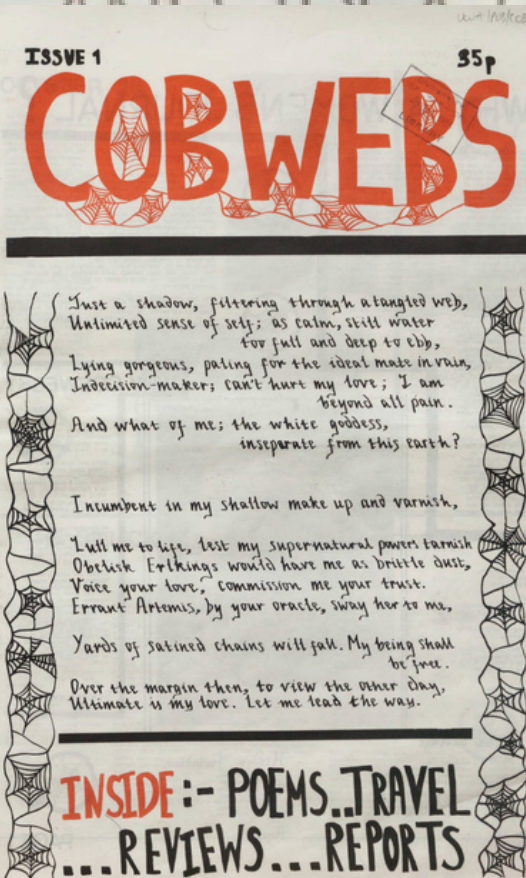


COBWEBS¹ - EMERGENCE

WHY "A WOMEN'S JOURNAL"?

Cobwebs aimed to be a place for women to **"express themselves both politically and culturally"** when given the space to

- ran **1986-87**
- the 'brainchild' of student Kim Hill, the 'driving force' behind the magazine
- '**student activist**' era
- a **newspaper** aimed (primarily) at feminist women students
- influenced by **male dominated campus environment, lack of understanding of feminism** among most students
- named Cobwebs due to **historical and contemporary associations** with feminism, and links to **core aims** eg 'web weaving'
- partially inspired by DIY **punk** culture and **feminist magazines** like *Spare Rib* and *Shocking Pink*



COBWEBS

UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

PRODUCTION

"It had an open and collective approach and came together with remarkable ease and co-operation."

- Self-admitted: little knowledge about magazine production – **DIY** feel
- Incorporation of both **print** and **handwriting**
- mostly black and white, though reds and purples used on covers and occasional pages – **bold** feel
- **Small layout team**
- **Low-cost** production and selling price (student friendly)
- Printed with help either from women in the General Office for typing or members of the team

Layout Say L17
Sior Edwards Nigel Barrett
Rebecca
Indi Nick
Ross Alison Donnell

special thanks to Nadine

35p

"Cob price for women – use
The personal is political."



"there were no mobile phones and no computers, just two word processors in the library."

COBWEBS' - CONTENT

- **Primary focus on issues faced by women** – male privilege, sexual violence, beauty standards, abortion, societal expectations re: marriage,
- **Campus** focus
- Discussion of **politics** – anarcho-feminism, peace protests, etc.
- Current events commented on through feminist lens
- **Poetry, drawings, creative writing**
- **Reviews** of feminist works - 'recommended reading'
- Articles about prominent feminist **figures** – Alice Walker, Simone de Beauvoir, Rosa Luxemburg



SEXUAL HARASSMENT
— **STOP IT!** —

Cover credit
concept: Ricko
Design, Artwork
and Lettering: P.

INSIDE :- POEMS..TRAVEL
...REVIEWS...REPORTS



PAUL SISSON

COBWEBS' - CREATIVITY

"we were all creative people who believed that originality and imagination really could change the world."

I imagine you drink Guinness -
You know "Strong Taste,
but still a woman's drink!"

Bloody great Guinness eyes -
Lashed like the froth
that sits,
on top,
of the glass.

(Delicious)

One sip.
Just once,
From the Pools
of Guinness Eyes.

(Pure genius
you are.)

Just to
Taste
Put down the glass,
Leave

Bitter Sweet.
Lip Service to what -
I
DON'T
KNOW.

Anon.

Cobwebs was characterised by its creativity - art, poetry, and creative writing were used both to protest sexist narratives, promote self expression, and vent frustration. Unfortunately this can't fit onto a small page like this - to explore further, see my bibliography, which links to the digitised *Cobwebs* archives.



" I got a lot of anger out of my system via the art works I made"

COBWEBS' - COMMUNITY

Perhaps above all, *Cobwebs* inspired a feminist community to come together across Warwick's campus. There were frequent calls to join in with a mixture of educational, political, and social activities. Some were women only, while some welcomed both men and women.

Access to practical support eg women's mornings at doctors, local sexual assault helplines

Films - eg screening of *Rosie the Riveter*

Parties and discos

Information about visiting feminist speakers

Links to societies and committees eg lesbian society

Open political discussions

Trips and days out - eg to Greenham



COBWEBS¹ - LEGACY

Unfortunately, *Cobwebs* has received little scholarly attention despite its relevance to the ever growing field of feminist media studies, and its particular uniqueness as a *student newspaper*. However, it positively impacted those who worked on the project politically, personally, and professionally.

"I've been passionate about gender-based (in)equality ever since."

"I'm now a writer and editor, and *Cobwebs* gave me my first experience of magazine production."

"Being a part of [*Cobwebs*]... offered a space for exploration and discussion."

"The production of *Cobwebs* represents a massively important time in both my life and those of my friends... I'm very proud of it."

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE COBWEBS ALUMNI
WHO TOLD ME ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES
ON THE MAGAZINE, WHICH PROVED
INVALUABLE TO MY PROJECT



FOR THE LOVE OF PRINT

We are in the midst of a digital age, but does this mean the end of print media? Certainly, we've seen blogs, social media, and ebooks rise rapidly in popularity. However, there is an indisputable dynamism inherent to print media. During my research, I went to the archives at my university, and looked at physical copies of Cobwebs. Although looking through the magazine digitally was interesting, the experience of holding the tangible product was arresting. The experience was not merely visual but tactile - physically turning the pages, noticing the colours and the type, flipping back and forth to take notes. Alison Piepmier speaks of a similar experience - teaching a class about zines, she described the excitement that both she and her students felt when they could examine a physical copy: she noted that her students were often inspired to make their own zines when they'd flicked through a paper zine, to a much higher extent than digital copies. Because of that, she believes that print media will never completely die out. There's something so magical and dynamic and fun about these creative projects, down to the imperfections; yellowed paper, little tears in the page, smudged ink. In my own experience, creating handmade projects has been therapeutic in a way creating the same projects digitally has felt - there is something magical in the the tangible. It's a regret of mine that my handwriting is too illegible to have created this zine physically. Print media is lovely and unique - I hope it never fades away.